



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: [oc.news@usda.gov](mailto:oc.news@usda.gov) • Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

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Ed Loyd (202) 720-4623  
Wayne Maloney (202) 690-0498

## **USDA ANNOUNCES ALMOST \$1.5 MILLION AVAILABLE TO COOPERATIVES TO ASSIST SMALL MINORITY PRODUCERS**

WASHINGTON, June 27, 2006 – Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns recently announced that nearly \$1.5 million in grant funds are now available to eligible cooperatives and associations of cooperatives to help small, minority producers develop business plans, conduct feasibility studies or create marketing plans.

“These funds are part of USDA’s efforts to assist small or minority producers to establish successful farming operations,” said Johanns. “By partnering with minority cooperatives to provide technical assistance to these producers, we can help foster additional job and economic opportunities in rural America.”

Under the Small Minority Producer Grant program, \$1,473,000 in grant funds are available to minority cooperatives or minority associations of cooperatives whose governing board and/or membership is comprised of at least 75 percent minority members. The funding is will be used to assist eligible small minority producers including farmers, ranchers, loggers, agricultural harvesters and commercial fishermen.

Applications must be postmarked and mailed no later than July 28, 2006, to be eligible for FY 2006 grant funding. Full details are available in the June 13 *Federal Register*. Application guides and materials are available at [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/smpg/smpg.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/smpg/smpg.htm) or in Nebraska, contact the USDA Rural Development state office at (402) 437-5551; Rm. 152 Federal Building 100 Centennial Mall North Lincoln, Neb. 68508.

USDA Rural Development’s mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested more than \$63 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, more than 1.1 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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